

Kosmas and Posey Urge House Committee to Restore Human Spaceflight Funding

Send Bipartisan Letter to Appropriations Committee Expressing the Urgent Need to Adequately Fund Exploration

(Washington, DC) — Today, Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas (FL-24) and Congressman Bill Posey (FL-15) sent a bipartisan letter to the House Appropriations Committee urging their colleagues to restore critical funding for NASA's human spaceflight program. On Thursday, the Appropriations Committee's Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) Subcommittee released their draft FY 2010 funding bill, which provides only \$3.3 billion for exploration, nearly \$700 million less than the President's request.

"With so many jobs at risk, we should be working to minimize the gap, not cutting funding for human spaceflight," said Congresswoman Kosmas. "I appreciate the desire to wait for recommendations from the Augustine Panel, but cutting funds in the meantime sends the wrong message and increases the risk of losing a professional workforce that may not be easily reassembled for future programs. Restoring funding and preserving jobs is a bipartisan, economic issue, and I am proud to work with Congressman Posey to express the urgency of the situation to the Appropriations Committee."

Congressman Bill Posey said, "I am disappointed that the appropriations bill going through Congress reduces NASA's budget even further. These additional cuts will further compromise our human spaceflight program. We need to restore the funding that was eliminated and provide additional resources to build a robust human spaceflight program and continue important advancements in technology."

The full Appropriations Committee will have an opportunity to make changes to the legislation during a markup on Tuesday, June 9. The bill will then have to pass the full House of Representatives and be reconciled with companion legislation from the Senate before being sent to the President.

The full text of the letter to the Appropriations Committee can be found below:

Dear Chairman Obey, Ranking Member Lewis, Chairman Mollohan, and Ranking Member Wolf,

As you prepare to consider the Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) Appropriations bill in a full committee mark-up this week, we urge you to increase topline funding for NASA to at least match the President's request of \$18.686 billion and to provide additional funding for the development of our next generation exploration capabilities.

NASA's human space flight programs have enjoyed strong support from Congress recently, as evidenced by the FY2010 budget resolution, which matched the President's request, and the NASA Authorization Act of 2008, which passed the House with overwhelming bi-partisan support. The authorization provided \$4.8 billion for Exploration, including an additional \$1 billion to accelerate the next generation human space flight program, and offered a reaffirmation of support for our nation's exploration policy stating, "Developing United States human space flight capabilities to allow independent American access to the International Space Station, and to explore beyond low Earth orbit, is a strategically important national imperative, and all prudent steps should thus be taken…"

Tens of thousands of jobs are at stake in our state and across the nation. In 2008, the U.S. space industry contributed approximately \$100 billion to the U.S. economy and directly employed more than 262,000 people in 41 states at skill levels and pay scales far above national averages according to the Department of Labor. In Florida, every direct NASA job translates into 2.82 jobs created statewide, with a total impact in FY2008 of \$4.1 billion in output, \$2.1 billion of household income and 40,802 jobs. With the second-highest job loss numbers in the nation in 2008, maintaining current jobs in Florida and ensuring future work at Kennedy Space Center (KSC) represents a road to economic recovery for Florida and our nation. A strong space program is crucial to our economy as a whole and is in the best interest of the nation; the next generation human space flight program will no doubt lead to innovations that will improve the lives of every American and help us address important issues facing our nation, including the development of new alternative energy, health care, and communications technologies.

While the funding levels in the bill for the Space Shuttle program provide an increase over FY2009 levels to ensure the safe completion of the manifest and the International Space Station (ISS), it is important to recognize that many workers at KSC and other NASA centers are already working on both Shuttle and next generation Exploration programs. Shuttle workers are also being trained for new work that is expected to be performed at KSC, including Orion manufacturing, ground operations work, and the Altair Lunar Lander. Continuing our nation's leadership in and dedication to human space flight means workers at KSC and across the country can continue to put their valuable and unique skills to work now and in coming years.

We believe the current level of funding as passed by the CJS subcommittee is inadequate for the future of our human space flight program. The implications of this funding level will mean a greater and longer reliance on Russia for access to space and the ISS and a loss of our highly-skilled aerospace workforce, and could be detrimental to small businesses across the country that drive our economy by both supplying NASA and commercializing of spin-off technologies.

It is inconceivable that we would voluntarily give up our global leadership position in human space flight, particularly at a time when our economic competitiveness is threatened. Retirement of the Shuttle is inevitable, but minimizing the gap between the retirement of the Shuttle and the next generation Exploration capability would help maintain and strengthen our leadership position in human space flight.

While we appreciate the committee's desire to await results of the Augustine Commission's findings, we are concerned by Chairman Mollohan's statement that "it is imperative that the Administration and Congress provide the necessary resources to meet that policy directive – in the annual President's budget and the annual Congressional budget process." The President's budget request included a note stating, "Following the human spaceflight review, the Administration will provide an updated request for Exploration activities reflecting the review's results." In addition to restoring the NASA funding level in the bill to not less than \$18.686 billion, we would seek assurances from you that following the release of the panel's recommendations the Congress will also work to provide appropriate resources later this summer and not wait until next year's budget cycle.

We must be willing to dedicate appropriate resources to ensure that our nation remains the leader in space. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working together for a strong space program.

Sincerely,

Suzanne M. Kosmas

Bill Posey

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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